

The Case for Teacher as a Researcher: Barriers and Benefits

BY.

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ABSTRACT

A teacher is many things. He can adopt multiple roles in view of need, situation and acquired skill. But, so far a teacher's role as a researcher in the classroom is concerned, there is difference of opinion among the educationists and researchers. This article puts forth the argumentation in favour of and against the teacher's role as a researcher in the classroom. The analysis of the situation discloses that proponents of the both views have their own logical points. Teacher's role as a researcher is encouraged on the grounds that he has the first hand knowledge and quite relevant information about the existing classroom situation. But, it is discouraged on the basis that a researcher should not be the part of the situation and research is not the basic responsibility of a teacher. If a teacher is involved in research activities in the classroom, it will not let teacher's creativity flourish.

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Summarily, the case goes in favour of teacher's role as a researcher. Because, research does not affect teaching negatively rather it helps the teachers think about their practice in a systematic way and keeps on improving their professional competence as an "on going activity". There have been enumerated several research activities which a teacher can conduct on job, in the classroom situation. Furthermore, important barriers which come in the way of a teacher's role as researcher have also been explored here. In the last part of the article, the Quranic and the Prophetic (ﷺ) foundations of research have been traced out which strongly strengthen the teacher's role as a researcher. It is a conceptual article which has been dictioned in a descriptive style. Its significance lies in the recognition of teacher's contribution for the action research, in particular.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher: Many Things and A Researcher

Pullias and Young (1969) and Khalid (2002, April) discuss that a teacher is many things. He is a guide, a teacher, a modernizer, a model, a counsellor, a creator, an authority, an inspirer of vision, a doer of routine, a breaker of camp, a story teller, an actor, a scene designer, a builder of community, a learner, a facer of reality, an emancipator, an evaluator, a conserver, a culminator and a person.

In addition to all these above-mentioned teacher's roles, we find there a different role of teacher as researcher in pullias and young (1969) study. they observe the teacher as a seeker, as one who does not know, keeps the spirit of inquiry alive and growing, he is in a genuine sense an investigator. the purpose and methods of his investigation will vary in terms of his interests and the maturity and ability level of his students. but, whatever, the subject of his interest or the level of his students, a special approach will characterize all that he does: the spirit of the investigator or researcher.

The Common Element between Teachers and Researchers

Gretel and Hansel (1999) have explored:

None of them has curtains: at their windows at home. Even as beginning teachers, they all have been willing to set off into strange and unknown places within their teaching, believing that there must be something better (pp. 111-112).

Controversy upon Teacher's Role as Researcher

There exists a division of opinion on the issue of teacher's role as a researcher. According to Siddiqui (1993), those who argue teacher's role as the researcher have these grounds:

- (i) Teachers have the expertise and first-hand knowledge;

- (ii) Teachers' research will be quite relevant, valuable for schools and teaching profession.

The opponents give their view:

- (i) Teacher research is not 'proper' research;
- (ii) Teachers do not have the expertise to carry out research.
- (iii) Teachers' real responsibility is teaching;
- (iv) It is practically not possible to justify the dual role of teacher and researcher.

Furthermore, Siddiqui recounts the opponents' view that researcher is considered as reliable interpreter of the action. To be objective and comment on what is going on in a better position, the researcher should be outside the situation. But, interference by the teacher himself as a researcher may contaminate the whole study. Moreover, it does not encourage teachers to be adventurous and creative, nor to be personally reflective and critical in teaching practice.

While giving the proponents' view, Sten House (1975) as cited in Siddiqui observes:

"Any research into the classroom must aim to improve teaching. Thus, any research must be applied by teachers, so that the most clinically objective research can only feed into practice through an interested actor in the situation. There is no escaping the fact that it is the teacher's

subjective perception which is crucial for practice since he is in the position to control the classroom."

Discussion and Conclusion in Favour of Teacher as Researcher:

The author agrees to Siddiqui's point that in classroom, we need a research whose aim is not just explanation or interpretation but improvement and transformation. We need the kind of research that deals with the problems and issues of the class, a research that is on going and takes into account the interests of people involved -teachers, students, parents, principals. The most suitable person for this kind of research is the classroom teacher (the insider).

There does exist the concept that if the teacher devotes more attention and time to research, there can be an impoverishment of the role of teacher. Teaching demands full involvement and application, while, research on the other hand requires certain degree of detachment.

The author concludes from this discussion that the assumption if teachers involve themselves in research it will affect negatively their teaching has been derived from the traditional rather 'narrow and rigid' concept of research. Teachers' research, in fact, helps the teachers think about their practice in a "systematic way' and keep on improving their professional competence as an "on going activity".

According to Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (1984), the term research can mean any sort of "careful, systematic, patient study and investigation in some field of knowledge, undertaken to discover or establish facts and principles" (p. 1208).

Frankel and Wallen (1993) have well said that all of us engage in actions that have some of the characteristics of formal research, although perhaps we do not realize at the time. We try out new methods of teaching, new materials, new textbooks. We compare what we did this with what we did last year. Teachers frequently ask students and colleagues their opinions about schools and classroom activities. We observe, we analyze, we question, we hypothesize, and we evaluate. But, rarely, do we these things systematically.

In author's opinion, teachers who are engaged in the process of teaching have some of the characteristics of formal research in their teaching-work although they do not realize at that time. For example, following activities of teachers occurring in classrooms can have partial characteristics of formal research:

- I. Evaluation of textual materials through students feedback;
- II. To check the effectiveness of various teaching methods through students' responses and achievements scores;

III. The observation/evaluation of students performance in internal monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, annual terminal exams.

Among teachers, there may be different types of research and different amounts of involvement in research as well said by Wiersma (1995), but all teachers should view educational research as a helpful mechanism for the improvement of teaching process.

Appropriate Manipulation of Circumstances for Teacher's Research-Work

Elliot (1988) has also given the way out how teachers can shape up particular circumstances for their research work. According to him, teachers should be encouraged to tape or video record episodes of classroom interaction and elicit students' perception of the extent to which their teaching exemplified and negated particular teaching procedures or principles.

The teacher should not be mere researcher in the classroom. Dockrell (1988) maintains that an observer may appear to be a figure of some authority or at least in close contact with people in authority. The presence of a mere researcher over a considerable period of time may be a source of considerable stress.

Teacher's Major Research Activities:

Cowie (1993) has defined activity as "action; specific thing or things done" (p. 13).

A teacher on job can conduct so many research activities in the classroom or institution. The author enumerates some of them as under:

Teacher as Researcher	Research Activities	Major Area
	Analysis of students aptitudes, interests for career Students planning	Students
	Case-studies of problem/discipline students.	Students
	Appraisal of students achievements	Students
	Evaluation of curriculum/textual materials	Curriculum
	Preparation and development of instructional material	Curriculum
	Investigation of problems in learning different subjects	Curriculum
	Manipulation of particular teaching situation in Teacher t accordance with relevant teaching theory.	Teacher
	Application of different teaching theories in the classroom.	Teacher
	Survey of physical facilities ascertaining to the students needs.	Milieu
	Identification of factors responsible for effective parent-teacher relationship.	Milieu
	Observation 'of the impact of A. V. Aids on students achievements/behaviours	Milieu

However, further additions in the body of 'research activities' and column of 'area' are possible.

Teacher's Major Research –Roles

As regards, teacher's major roles as a researcher, the author puts them as under:

I- Investigation.

A- Analyser.

D- Developer.

A- Applyer.

M- Manipulator.

O- Observer.

E- Evaluator.

A- Assessor.

S- Surveyor.

EASIADAMO

The writer has synthesized these major research - roles of a teacher in jumbled -lettered word -'easiadamo'.

So many other roles of a teacher as a researcher can be pointed out. Roles are sets of behavior that persons expect of occupants of a position.

(Dyne and Pine, 1988); (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2001).

Barriers in Teacher's Role as Researcher

According to the findings of Hilsum and Cane (1979) research study, following barriers come in the way of

teachers role as researchers themselves or contributors towards research activities:

1. The teachers feel that research findings are reported in a form, which is difficult, if not impossible, for them to understand.
2. Much current research is esoteric: research needed to be relevant to teachers in 'average' condition.
3. Research findings are frequently ignored. Teachers feel that research is a waste of time anyway.
4. It is the teacher's task to translate new concepts, new theories into practice but guidance at this point is usually either limited or unpractical for the teachers.
5. Parents and employers demand immediate practical results from teachers which are often inimical (in the short term) to the new methods.
6. Up and down the country, schools are in the throes of reorganization. Various schemes are largely planned by unknown administrators in reaction to political pressures rather than the real needs of the education service. The work and states of the teacher is being directly affected by these plans. Teachers have to remain defensive at such times to an outsider observer.
7. There are fears among the teachers that an observer/researcher will misunderstand what has been observed. Because, he is not fully aware of the

background of the incidents under observation in the classroom.

8. The relationship, which teacher and class build with each other is highly individual. There may be a feeling that the presence of another adult may interfere with this rapport.
9. The observer may wish to visit the school when teacher and class are unsettled e.g. at the beginning or end of the term. The teacher may feel unsure of him at such times.
10. Schools are subject to a great many interruptions due to varied intrusions. from advisers, inspectors, students, parents, welfare workers and researchers. Many teachers, understandably, try to keep these demands on their time to a minimum.
11. The teachers may be critical of the proposed research on disagreement with the research design; the inevitable distortion caused by the observers' presence, the failure to believe in the ultimate usefulness of the research, suspicion about the motives of the researchers, and conflict with the observer's personality.

Teacher's Role as Researcher in the Islamic Perspective

The Quran and Hadith have laid great emphasis upon research. The injunctions put forth thereby serve a great

purpose for the reinforcement of teachers' role as researchers. The Holy Quran declares:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ﴾

O believers! Avoid most of suspicions. (49: 12)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا﴾

O believers! If any disobedient comes to you with any news make a strict enquiry, (49: 6)

﴿وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوا عَلَيْهَا صُمًّا وَعُمْيَانًا﴾

And, those who are reminded of the Verses of their Rubb (Sustainer) do not take them as deaf and blind, threat, (25: 73)

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾

It is He who raised among the unlettered people a Rasool (Messenger of Allah) from among themselves, who recites to them His revelations and purifies them, and teaches the Book and the Wisdom, although they were before that in clear error. {62: 02}.

Zubairi (2000) observes that research is concerned with continuous search of new and important facts, The Quran has mentioned here the Prophetic role of teacher as teaching of wisdom to those who were in clear error

before, Zubairi adds that the most important tool of verification is research. The Quran has instructed for the verification in the sense of ﴿فَتَبَيَّنُوا﴾ "Fatabuyyanoo" -to make strict enquiry.

A number of Hadiths of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) can be quoted in favour of research. Researching teaching will foster improved teaching, Wiersma (1995) maintains that there is the inherent assumption that research fosters improvement. The Holy Prophet (r) has stated that whose today is not better than yesterday has gone to destruction. He (r) has advised us:

خذ ما صفا ودع ما كدر

"Take the transparent and leave the opaque".

دع ما يريبك إلى ما يريبك

"Give up whatever puts you in suspicion in favour of that does not put you in suspicions",

(AI-Bokhari: Kitab-ul-Boyooh' -Hadith No.3).

الحكمة ضالة المؤمن فحيث وجدها فهو أحق بها

"Wisdom is the lost asset of the believer. So, wherever, he finds it, he is the most deserving to (take) it." (Tirmizi: Kitab-ul-Ilm- Hadith No, 19)

If teachers act upon these Hadiths of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), it will definitely reinforce their role as researchers.

Suggestions for the Promotion of Teacher's Role as a Researcher.

1. Every school teacher, lecturer, professor, really, interested in research must be equipped with a

laboratory technician (or research assistant) who should work for him on a permanent basis. (Khan, 1993).

2. The institutional Heads of schools, colleges and universities should provide adequate facilities, proper guidance, flexible scheduling and encouragement for teachers' engagement in research activities.
3. Those teachers who are saddled with special responsibilities concerning research should enjoy a reduced teaching load. (Nurul-Haq, 1969)
4. There should be allocation of research-fund in all schools and colleges. Already, there is no allocation of research-fund in schools and general education colleges.
5. The post of Educational Research Officer should be created at each district level for the transmission of important educational research findings of Provincial Research Institutes to the field educational institutions and acquisition of field-institutions' feedback and response upon those researches.
6. Research-guides/manuals published in easy and simple language bearing simplified educational research designs must be provided to the teachers by Curriculum and Research Development Centre (CRDC) and Provincial Text Book Boards, every year.
7. Teachers' research findings should be made public. The institutional administrators and departmental

authorities should extend their cooperation in this context.

8. All Heads of Secondary Schools, Inter/Degree or Post Graduate Colleges must hold a research-fair or workshop every year in their institutions. As regards primary and elementary schools, they should have collaboration with the nearby secondary schools.

Epilogue

The Demand of the Day: Teachers Research Activities Intensified in Higher Education Reform Draft Ordinance 2002

Presidential Steering Committee on Higher Education have intensified teachers role as researcher in the reform proposals presented in the form of a draft ordinance. Raja (2002) points out that according to draft Ordinance Reform Proposals, all new appointments should be for a limited period during which the new recruit must exhibit the ability and willingness to carry out research and teaching. Thus, teachers' research activities have been more intensified thereby.

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